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WHO DENIED AS INDICATED

December 6, 1978

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MEMORANDUM

EXCISE

TO: ARA/CAR - Mr. Ashley C. Hewitt

FROM: ARA/CAR - John C. Griffith

SUBJECT: Recollections of Meeting on November 13
with Congressman Ryan, et al

EXCISE

To the best of my recollection, Jackie Speiers, with whom I had been in close contact regarding CODEL Ryan's visit to Guyana, telephoned me on the morning of the Friday before Congressman Ryan was scheduled to leave for Guyana and said that the Congressman had two former members of the People's Temple in his office. These former People's Temple members had a plane to catch that afternoon, and Congressman Ryan wished to bring them to the Department so that they could brief the Department on what they knew of the People's Temple. As I recall, either she said that Dick Belt of CA/SCS was setting up a meeting to meet with Congressman Ryan or I told her I would ask Dick Belt to do so. In any event, a meeting was arranged that morning, November 13, by SCS. I attended. Among those I remember as being present were Congressman Ryan, Jackie Speiers and Jim Scollart who were accompanying the Congressman to Guyana, as well as Terry Fortune of L/ARA, Dick Belt, and Al Gise of CA who chaired the meeting. The two former members of the People's Temple, both of them young ladies, were also present. I do not remember their names, but in the light of subsequent events, I believe one of them

Congressman Ryan and the two former People's Temple members, especially the one I believe to be _____ dominated the meeting, briefing the State Department

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participants on the People's Temple. Congressman Ryan started by explaining how he had become interested in the People's Temple. As I recall, this interest arose out of several complaints regarding the People's Temple from his constituents in California. In looking into these complaints, it became apparent that something was wrong with the People's Temple, and the more he looked into it the more he was determined to get to the bottom of the People's Temple situation and, if possible, straighten it out. He said he was going to Guyana to see if allegations of brainwashing and that the Temple was holding members against their will were correct. He recognized the difficulties involved and that his visit might stir up trouble in the People's Temple in Guyana. However, he was determined to go and assured us that he would try to avoid any unnecessary difficulty or confrontation with the Embassy, Guyanese officials, or People's Temple representatives. Rather, he said, he would try to seek their cooperation and, to the extent possible, friendship. However, when asked what he would do if the People's Temple continued to refuse to allow him to visit Jonestown, he replied that he would camp on the doorstep of the People's Temple office in Georgetown until he was received and allowed to present his case for permission to visit Jonestown. If this took longer than the three to four days projected for his visit, he was prepared to extend the time he spent in Georgetown.

Most of the rest of the meeting was taken up with the narration of the two former People's Temple members of their experiences with the Temple. The former Temple member [REDACTED] did most of the talking. She was prompted from time to time by Congressman Ryan. She told how her family had become involved with the People's Temple (I do not remember the details), and said that Jones had moved the Temple from northern California to San Francisco to enhance the Temple's political clout. (Either she or Ryan characterized Jones as a Marxist.) She related how Jones used to send bus loads of Temple members to Los Angeles. These excursions were very profitable. The Temple also made a great deal of money, she alleged, by extracting a tithe from members and by having members sign over their property, real estate, etc., to the Temple.

Turning to her experiences in Guyana, the former People's Temple member [REDACTED] with occasional reference to the other ex-Temple member, said that she had

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become increasingly disillusioned with Jones and the Temple movement. She had had to do heavy agricultural work in the fields at Jonestown with People's Temple messages constantly being broadcast to all parts of Jonestown. She felt herself brainwashed and said that if she fell down on her work she was punished as were others, either physically or by being criticized or shunned by other members of the Jonestown community. In evening congregations of the community, members were required to confess their "sins" and were often set upon physically by others. At these meetings, Jones often required Temple members to reaffirm their faith in him and to adore him as if he were a god. When visitors came to Jonestown, she said, their visits were carefully orchestrated as was all contact with outsiders both in California and Guyana. When a visitor such as the Consul from Embassy Georgetown came to Jonestown, she said, those he was to see were carefully rehearsed. She said that while the Temple made a point of showing its peaceful, friendly side to outsiders, there was an underlying aura of violence within the Temple community. I also seem to recall that she mentioned that Jones maintained a para-military guard and that there were a limited number of firearms and other weapons at Jonestown. She also described participation in a mass suicide ritual. She had not known it was a practice ritual when it started and said that the hysteria was such that she actually felt pains in her stomach.

The former People's Temple member [REDACTED] said that as a result of her growing disillusionment with Jones and the People's Temple she decided to try to escape. She also said that it was increasingly obvious to her that Jones was using the Temple movement for personal aggrandizement. When she was sent to Georgetown to help with the People's Temple office there, she made herself so useful to the Georgetown office that she was allowed to stay on. She contacted Dick McCoy who she said was very helpful. She obtained an airplane ticket back to the United States from, I believe, her family, and Dick McCoy gave her a passport. Her regular passport was in Jonestown, she said, and she was afraid to ask for it for fear that the People's Temple would prevent her departure. She also described how Dick McCoy accompanied her to the airport to allay her concern that she would be stopped by Guyanese officials or the People's Temple. She said that the People's Temple was given special treatment at the airport by the Guyanese and was even allowed access to restricted areas and to interview both arriving and departing passengers associated with the Temple. She also said that the People's Temple had suborned not only airport officials but a number of senior Guyanese officials and that members of the People's

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Temple were assigned to subvert Guyanese in positions of influence by granting sexual favors. In relating the story of her escape from Guyana, the former People's Temple member [REDACTED] had nothing but praise for Dick McCoy's help and deportment vis-a-vis the Temple, both in Georgetown and Guyana.

During her narration, the former People's Temple member [REDACTED] said that the Temple used shortwave radios as its main means of communication between its Georgetown office and Jonestown and the United States. The Temple had devised an elaborate system of code words which were used when confidential material was transmitted.

Note: Transcribed as dictated.

Drafted: ARA/CAR:JCGF/4/1 with:nhm
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